

catastrophic disasters, whether natural or from a terrorist attack. Congress owes it to our constituents and to our first responders to be more thoughtful in how we provide the resources necessary to improve our ability to detect, and respond to threats facing our Nation.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today the Senate passed the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill conference report. The bill provides \$30.8 billion in discretionary spending for the Department of Homeland Security. While it is important that the Senate acted to pass this legislation, I am concerned about the funding levels provided for critical programs in this conference report. Specifically, the bill cuts funding for vital first-responders grants, and fails to improve our Nation's transit and aviation security.

I fear that we have failed to learn from the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London about the vulnerability of our transit system. Yesterday's terrorist threat against the New York City transit system further illustrates the need to increase our efforts in this area. Yet the conference report that we passed today includes only \$150 million for transit security grants. In June, Senators SHELBY and SARBANES and I sponsored an amendment to raise funding for transit security to more than \$1 billion. Unfortunately, the amendment failed. But it is this level of funding, not \$150 million, that is necessary to keep the Nation safe.

Every workday, 14 million Americans take a train or a bus. We know that transit systems and their riders are by their very nature prime terrorist targets. Subways, light rail, buses, and ferries are designed for easy access and to move large numbers of people efficiently.

These are the facts: Numerous attacks on transit; 6,000 transit systems in the U.S.; and 14 million riders every workday. I don't think anyone can say transit is not a target for terrorists and should not be among our highest homeland security priorities. Yet the Federal Government's response to these facts has been underwhelming. Indeed, the Federal Government has invested \$9 in aviation security improvements per passenger, but only \$0.006 in public transportation security per passenger. Now, are aviation and transit the same and can we achieve the same level of security in the open access environment of transit? No, but I doubt that the 14 million Americans who use transit every workday think that less than one cent is the appropriate amount to invest in transit security.

Second, I am concerned about the cuts that the bill provides to aviation screening. The bill would cut funding for the aviation security screener workforce by \$125 million from the budget request. This cut will result in 2,000 fewer airport screeners nationwide, including cuts in the number of screeners in Rhode Island. Rather than cutting the number of screeners, we

need to increase the nationwide number to 53,000 screeners in order to keep wait times at the current average of about 10 minutes. Yesterday, President Bush in an attempt to rally public support for the war in Iraq stated that the Government disrupted 10 serious terrorist plots since September 11, 2001. Three of these plots involved hijacking airplanes for suicide attacks. Yet, today, the Republican Congress cut the number of screeners serving our airports.

Finally, the bill cuts funding for first-responder grants for States and local governments by about 17 percent, \$680 billion less than last year, and failed to include a formula to help ensure all states would receive adequate funding and protection.

This conference report does not do enough to protect Americans from terrorism threats or natural disasters. This is a continuation of the administration's, and the leadership of this Congress, pattern of failure to learn from past lessons and invest in the essential infrastructure necessary to make our country safe. Is this the type of belt-tightening the administration is willing to accept in order to continue to pay for irresponsible tax cuts?

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President. I rise today to express my displeasure with the Homeland Security appropriations conference report. More specifically, the conferees' neglect of formula based funding for State's first responders could produce dire results for small rural States such as Arkansas.

The conferees' decision to cut this funding, by more than half, will make it harder for smaller States to prevent, and more importantly, respond to emergency situations either manmade or natural. The events of the last 2 months alone go to show that first responders need to be prepared regardless of where they are located geographically.

The conferees' decision to cut first responder funding is even more frustrating seeing that the U.S. Senate a few months ago overwhelmingly passed a Homeland Security appropriations bill that went to great lengths to maintain a minimum base of first responder funding for all States. The formula which was created by Senators SUSAN COLLINS and JOSEPH LIEBERMAN was fair and would have provided stability to our Homeland Security appropriations process. I commend these Senators for their hard work and regret that their formula was ignored by conferees.

The conferees' actions will not only do great disservice to small States' first responders this year, but they have guaranteed that we will yet again spend precious time next year working out a funding formula to allocate Homeland Security grant money. There are many other issues that we must tackle but an inability to reach an understanding on this important issue will keep us stuck in the mud and that, Mr. President, is a disservice to all States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does any other Member seek recognition?

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I yield back time on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time having been yielded, the question is on agreeing to the conference report.

The conference report was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RELIEF FOR THE GULF COAST

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, there has been a lot of activity on the floor over the last 24 hours. It has been focused on how best to help the people along the gulf coast who have been devastated by twin natural disasters, Katrina and Rita. There has been an ongoing debate that took up the night here in trying to determine how best to provide the funding that the cities and parishes in Louisiana and in Mississippi and Alabama and Texas need in order to begin to deal with their pressing, urgent needs.

I rise because I well remember the feelings that I had on this floor in the aftermath of the attacks we suffered on September 11, 2001. It was an uncertain and tragic time in our country. We were attacked and we lost nearly 3,000 people. Eighteen acres were destroyed in the heart of the financial capital of the world. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs. Businesses were shuttered, and there was great doubt as to how we were going to obtain the resources to begin the recovery process.

I am grateful that in New York's hour of need, we had strong support in this Chamber. I am looking at my dear friend, the senior Senator from West Virginia, who came to our aid immediately. In fact, he said he would be the third Senator from New York.

Mr. BYRD. Yes.

Mrs. CLINTON. I have never forgotten that. I am so grateful because he helped to shepherd through the Congress the money that New York needed immediately to meet its needs.

I am someone who believes that in a time of natural or manmade disaster, Americans rally around each other. We

take care of each other. We provided funds from all over the country to help New York rebuild, just as we did after the Northridge earthquake in California, just as we did after hurricanes in Florida, just as we did after forest fires in the West, just as we did after the great floods in the Middle West.

There has never been a disaster of the dimension of what we are facing along the gulf coast. I believe I have a small bit of understanding and empathy because of what we went through in New York for what my colleagues, Senator VITTER and Senator LANDRIEU, are facing. But what is becoming clear to me is that there is an effort underway to make the recovery along the gulf coast much more difficult than it needs to be.

I have been stunned at some of the demands that I hear coming from some of those in the Congress about what is expected from the people along the gulf coast and what kinds of funds can be made available to them. Like many people, I have been touched, moved, and impressed by the passion and eloquence of my friend and colleague, the senior Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU. She has valiantly fought for the people who placed their trust in her to come to this Capitol and represent them in good times and bad. We are in a bad time. The people in Louisiana and along the gulf coast need champions. But no matter how eloquent a single Senator is or two Senators might be from a single State, they need support on both sides of the aisle and on both ends of the Capitol.

We are about to be presented with legislation that for the life of me I cannot understand. This legislation in law discriminates against the gulf coast. It says, for the first time ever, we will put conditions on the Federal money that goes through FEMA to the people and businesses of the gulf coast.

Mr. BYRD. Shame. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. We will require that the money be repaid. As Senator LANDRIEU has said in this Chamber: It is a little bit of a catch-22, isn't it? You say to hard-pressed sheriffs' offices in parishes, to municipal governments in towns and in New Orleans and along the gulf coast, you say to them: You must repay this money. So before you borrow it to keep your police and your fire departments up and going, before you borrow it to have your public utility departments begin to do the work they need to to get the reimbursement they require, you must have a plan in place to repay it.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. I am bewildered. I don't understand why we are turning the people of the gulf coast into second-class citizens.

After 9/11, in addition to the normal disaster relief funds provided in the wake of that tragedy, the Federal Government designated \$20 billion to assist the New York City area. This was the first time FEMA received authority of this type to reimburse the city and the

State for associated costs that could not otherwise have received money under the Stafford Act. This was an unusual action taken at an unusual time. We had the strong support of then-chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator JEFFORDS, because 9/11 happened in that window when the Democrats were in the majority in the Senate. Chairman Jeffords stood with us to make sure we got what we needed without discriminating against New York City, without telling New Yorkers: You are just going to have to figure out how you are going to repay it, when you are not even sure there is another attack coming or what is going to be occurring in the future.

Mr. President, we are again facing an unusual time. Hurricane Katrina, and then, of course, Hurricane Rita, devastated New Orleans and the surrounding areas. The people of this region deserve our full support. Instead of providing that support and helping these communities meet their needs, the proposal before us actually restricts their access to funds by preventing them from using principal forgiveness authorities that are part of current law.

I know this has been presented apparently by the leadership in the House as a take-it-or-leave-it deal. I know what a difficult position that puts our two Senators from Louisiana in because they are basically being told you can leave here with \$750 million with discriminatory conditions on it that make your people second-class citizens compared to everybody else, or you can leave with nothing. Well, that is a Hobson's choice if there ever was one.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. Bring nothing home or bring something that is not going to help your hospitals, is not available to many communities because they are not going to be able to borrow it in the first place because they cannot repay it.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. I came from a meeting where a number of business executives along the gulf coast are desperately trying to figure out what they are going to do. Entergy in New Orleans has just taken bankruptcy. They said if they have to put the costs they are accruing into the rate base—which they have to do under these circumstances—rates are going to rise 200 percent.

What are people with no jobs and no businesses—and we will not even give them an unemployment compensation extension, we will not pass the Medicaid emergency application process which we used in New York—going to do? We had a one-page Medicaid eligibility program that got people back into a position where they could get their health needs met. We are not doing any of that for people along the gulf.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I have the deepest sympathy for my col-

leagues from Louisiana. They are between a rock and a hard place.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. Go home with nothing or go home with a bad deal.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. And a deal that has never been inflicted on any other city, State, or region in our country.

Mr. BYRD. What a shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. Finally, Mr. President, this is all being done in the name of the deficit. I know, I read the papers. We have a lot of people who have discovered the deficit up here.

Mr. BYRD. Cut the funds for Iraq.

Mrs. CLINTON. There are a lot of other alternatives than imposing discriminatory conditions on the American people—the American people along the gulf coast.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, together we can do better than this. A strong America begins at home.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. And we should owe our highest allegiance to the people who are in this country. And before we extend 100 billion more dollars in tax cuts, and before we continue to run up this deficit by funding the war and all of the other associated expenses, let's get some responsibility back here and let's treat the people of the gulf coast with the respect and dignity they deserve.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BYRD. Hear hear.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Hear hear.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

COMMUNITY DISASTER LOAN ACT OF 2005

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 1858, the Vitter bill, which is at the desk, that the bill be read three times, passed, and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let the Record be spread with my admiration for the senior Senator from the State of Louisiana for her tireless work on behalf of the people of Louisiana. I think most all of us would agree that this bill is imperfect, and that is an understatement. But I so appreciate the enthusiasm, the diligence, the hard work of my friend from the State of Louisiana, Senator LANDRIEU.

Also, once this bill passes—and it will pass—I think the focus then moves to the other side of the Capitol. I hope those people who are listening to this who have connections with the administration would assist us in getting the House to do the right thing: not only pass what we have done here, but hopefully take out this provision which I